



ANG

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Editorial

The revolutionary movement's struggle for children's rights and welfare

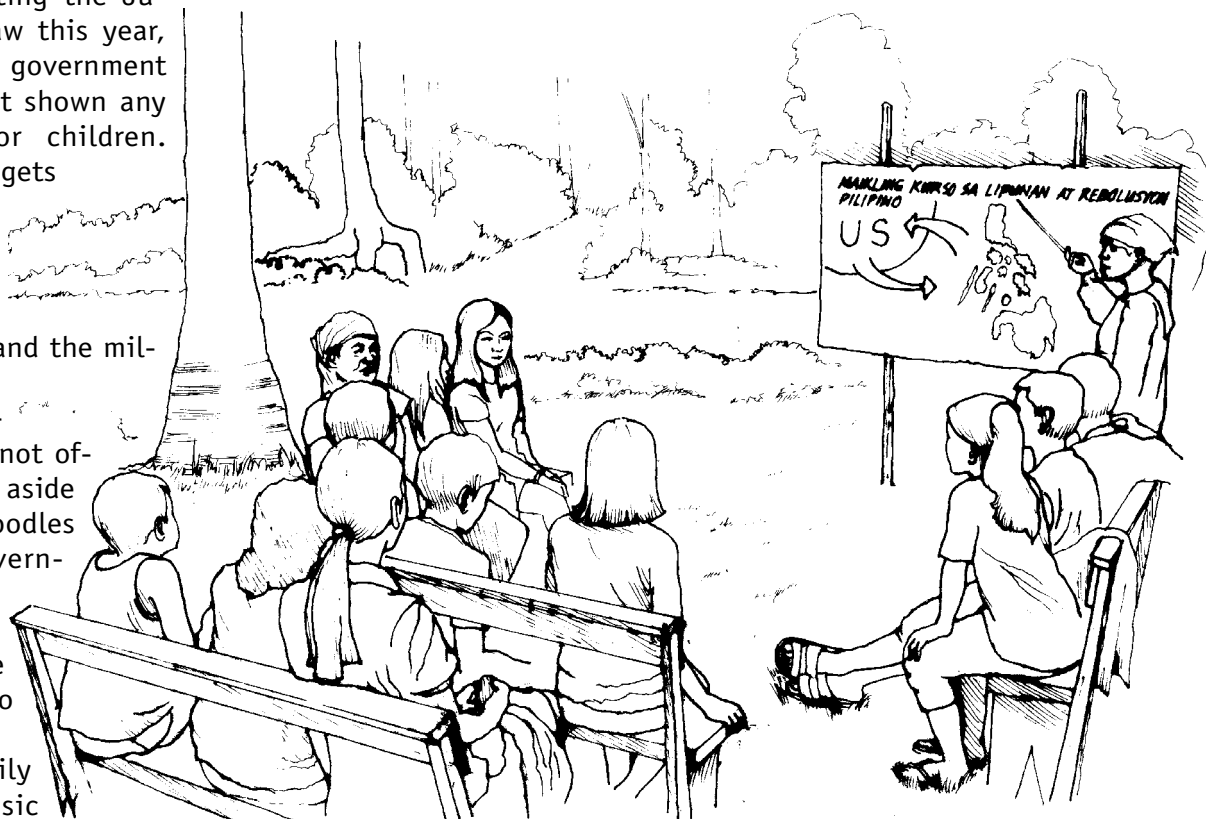
Like their parents, most of the country's children are victims of the scourge of imperialism, feudalism and the government's utter rottenness and military fascism. Under the present exploitative and oppressive semifeudal and semicolonial system, children are victims of the government's apathy for their conditions and negligence of their basic needs. They suffer from hunger and malnutrition, lack of health and educational services and the like. Examples abound of street children and child workers who work in dangerous, abusive and unsanitary conditions in exchange for slave wages.

Despite enacting the Juvenile Justice Law this year, the reactionary government and state has not shown any genuine love for children. Every year, budgets for education and health fall in comparison to allotments for foreign debt and the military. Despite widespread malnutrition, it has not offered anything aside from instant noodles which the government sells at a slightly lower price. Its fake programs fail to strategically or even temporarily provide the basic

needs of children and their parents. Worse, these children are not spared from the military's counterinsurgency war.

Children have no chance of having a prosperous, peaceful and liberated future under the present semifeudal and semicolonial system. Their dream for a bright future can only be realized when the existing rotten state and system is destroyed and national freedom and genuine democracy are realized.

Upholding the interests of children is among the basic objectives of the Party and the entire revolutionary movement. Under the leadership of the Par-



ty, with the help of the NPA and through local mass associations and organs of political power—including committees for women, education, culture, livelihood and health—children's interest and welfare and their need for literacy, health, education, happiness and awareness are steadfastly promoted by the revolutionary movement.

Measures focused on education, literacy and health of children and their mothers are being carried out in guerrilla zones, fronts and bases alongside economic programs based on the level of organization and capacity of the revolutionary authority and war conditions.

Policies against child abuse and overworking of children are implemented. The entire community is taught to fight backward, unscientific, rotten, feudal and bourgeois ideas and practices, including those pertaining to children. Efforts are made to ensure that children have the opportunity and time to play, learn and be happy.

The revolutionary movement instills into children a patriotic,

democratic and progressive ideology, culture and tradition. Their ability to uphold their own rights and welfare is nurtured. They are encouraged to participate in age-appropriate revolutionary programs and activities in their communities. Their participation in the revolutionary struggle in different ways can be perceived as part of their efforts to create a beneficial future for themselves and the next generations.

With adult supervision, children are given the chance to participate in programs for livelihood, politics, education, culture, health and security and other tasks which are important and beneficial to their communities and the revolution.

Among the tasks that children carry out are teaching basic literacy and other topics to younger children, organizing cultural groups and launching shows as well as their own cooperatives and collective livelihood projects.


The revolutionary movement upholds the right of children to participate in, and support, the collective self-defense of their communities and be involved in is-

sués regarding their own security and welfare in the face of fascist attacks and also in their desire to defeat the ills that destroy the Filipino people. Their rights are defended. They are likewise taught to stand up for and defend their rights, particularly against the state's fascist forces, criminals and other exploitative forces and elements.

They also participate in some noncombat tasks in the defense of their communities and which support the armed struggle, including monitoring the enemy, carrying messages and setting up security alarms, bringing food to the people's army and other tasks as long as these do not put them in danger and are in accordance with their physical abilities. In addition to this, the CPP, NPA and revolutionary movement make sure that youth who have not yet reached the minimum age are not recruited as NPA fighters or do not participate directly in armed combat.

The revolutionary forces understand the importance of, and directly address the issue of children in conflict, especially in the face of the intensified and indiscriminate brutality of the reactionary state's fascist forces. The Communist Party of the Philippines, New People's Army and entire revolutionary movement are committed to carrying out the necessary steps to guarantee the rights and welfare of children.

The revolutionary movement's commitment to work for a bright future for children is part of the general revolutionary endeavor to end all forms of exploitation and oppression and build a free, democratic and prosperous society. It is the children and the next generations of the toiling masses who stand to benefit the most from the revolution's victory. **AB**

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Interview by the Unicef Research Team with the CPP EC-CC on the question of child soldiers

April 2006

The following questions were addressed to the CPP central leadership by a team of researchers from the United Nations Children's Fund (Unicef) working on a Unicef research project on the situation of children and women amid the armed conflict in the Philippines. The questions were answered by the Executive Committee of the CPP Central Committee (EC-CC).

Question: *What is the rationale behind the 1988 and 1999 policies?*

Answer: In its 1988 meeting, the CPP Political Bureau took stock of the situation of the New People's Army's (NPA) strength and work, of the organs of political power and of the guerrilla zones and bases in order to consolidate the big advances during the previous years, especially at the height of the struggle against the US-Marcos dictatorship, and in order to face the ruthless Total War of the reactionary state.

The CPP Political Bureau (CPP-PB) issued a more definitive minimum age policy for recruitment into the NPA in line with its effort to systematize and improve its recruitment, training and promotion of NPA fighters and officers. At the same time, it planned out efforts to develop the work of the organs of political power and mass organizations in guerrilla zones—especially the work of health, education and cultural com-

mittees—with special attention to addressing the welfare of children.

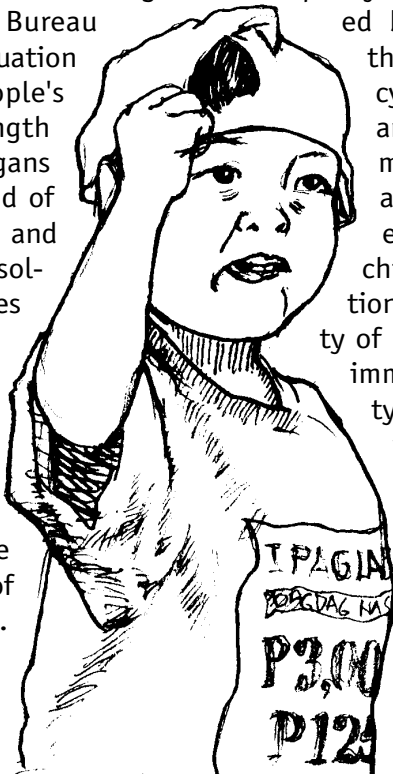
In issuing the minimum age policy, the CPP-PB was guided by the following: (a) the long-standing policy of the Party, the NPA and the revolutionary movement to uphold and protect the interests and welfare of children; (b) some questions regarding the quality of recruits, including the immaturity and instability of minors; and (c) pertinent provisions of Protocol II of the Geneva Conventions.

In particular, the CPP-PB took notice of the phenomenon of more and more young people wanting to join the New People's Army.

This phenomenon resulted from the intense militarization in the countryside that boosted applications of the peasant youth to join the revolutionary armed struggle. It also reflected the deep and wide mass support for the NPA. The lack of a clear-cut age requirement policy previous to this resulted in many cases of teeners joining the ranks of the NPA.

The CPP Political Bureau resolved to define more precisely the rules of the NPA, making explicit a minimum age requirement of 18 years old. Such a policy was based on the assumption that NPA recruits should have had acquired a sufficient level of maturity—physical, emotional, intellectual and social—to be able to make informed decisions, have a clear and intelligent understanding of the prevailing socio-economic and political situation and problems, have a firm grasp of revolutionary principles and the readiness to perform revolutionary tasks and face the difficulties and sacrifices entailed in advancing the revolutionary armed struggle.

The CPP and the NDFP (the revolutionary alliance of which the CPP is a member) at that time also formed a special task force (named "Task Force Geneva") to study the Geneva Conventions and Protocols on human rights and international humanitarian law and their consistency with the basic principles, rules and practice of the CPP, NPA and NDFP with the following objectives: (a) to determine the consistency of these with the principles, rules and practices of the CPP, NPA and NDFP with the view of formally acceding to these conventions; (b) to raise the consciousness of the revolutionary forces with regard to international humanitarian law (IHL) and thereby further develop the revolutionary movement's policies and practices; and (c) to prepare for formal peace talks with the Government of the Republic of the Philippines (GRP) in accordance with IHL and international norms.



In 1999, the EC-CC issued a memorandum to all Party organs and NPA commands to reiterate and emphasize the need for strict compliance with the 18-year old minimum age requirement for recruitment into the NPA. The memo, at the same time, reiterated the CPP's formal accession through the NDFP to all human rights and international humanitarian laws in accordance with the Geneva Conventions and related protocols. International deliberations were then ongoing with regard to the proposed Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, including the 18 years minimum age provision for recruitment into combat units. The CPP declared automatic accession to this optional protocol even before it was signed as an international treaty two years later.

Question: *What is the scope of the policy? Apart from the actual statement of policy, how explicit are the following: formal explanation of the rationale; procedures for processing applicants; and protocols for turning away minors?*

Answer: The minimum age requirement initially spelled out in 1988 has since become a basic policy of the NPA and covers the entire organization. Compliance with this policy and the re-

iteration that there are to be no exceptions were further reechoed in 1999 through a memorandum of the Executive Committee of the CPP-CC, as well as in 2002 by way of a resolution by the CPP Central Committee's 11th plenum.

There have been standard procedures for processing recruits. Except for the additional step of checking on the applicants' age, these procedures have remained basically unchanged. The personal background, politics and record of each recruit as well as recommendations by the local Party branch, the local militia, the local mass organizations they belong to, other local activists and other knowledgeable resource persons are first taken into account, reviewed and discussed by concerned Party organs and NPA commands before any actual recruitment could take place.

Those who fail to meet the minimum age requirement of 18 years are asked to wait, undergo further preparation and are, in the meantime, either assigned to various other non-combat and non-hazardous tasks as civilian activists or sent home to support the family production or resume their schooling.

Question: *Are there any exceptions to the policy, given that the Optional Protocol allows for it? Have there been actual requests for exceptions, given cultural considerations and various realities on the ground (i.e. practice of youth taking various responsibilities even at an early age, safety of the youth from the military, etc.)?*

Answer: The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child does permit voluntary recruitment into national

armed forces under the age of 18 years provided specific minimum safeguards are ensured, as Article 3 of the optional protocol states, to wit:

(a) Such recruitment is genuinely voluntary;

(b) Such recruitment is carried out with the informed consent of the person's parents or legal guardians;

(c) Such persons are fully informed of the duties involved in such military service;

(d) Such persons provide reliable proof of age prior to acceptance into national military service.

The CPP-NDFP-NPA, however, does not entertain any exception even in consideration of this article. In this regard, the CPP-NDFP-NPA has taken a far more advanced position than that set by the Geneva conventions and protocols on child soldiers.

Even as there have been no basic objection within the CPP and the NPA regarding the minimum recruitment age policy, some NPA units had indeed requested certain case-to-case exemptions from the policy. Such requests were, however, turned down by the central leadership.

As some of the requests stated, peasant children as young as 8 or 9 years of age have had to participate in the productive work of adults due to extreme poverty. Thus, by their mid-teens, peasants have generally become quite mature and adult relative to most children their age in the cities. This is most especially so among national or ethnic minorities in the countryside, most of whom are already married by the time they reach 15 years of age. Thus, there were some requests for exemption from hard-up peasant communities and especially from national minority communities where children have to work as hard as their elders to pro-



duce for their families and for the community.

Other requests for exemption were brought about by immediate dangers to the lives of children whose parents were being hunted down or who were themselves being pursued by the government's military.

However, all these appeals for exemption to the minimum-age policy were turned down by the CPP leadership, to show the Party's determination to protect the rights and welfare of children and uphold international conventions dealing with the question of child soldiers. This was deemed the best measure to counteract as well the malicious claims by the AFP of "massive and systematic recruitment of child soldiers" by the NPA.

Question: *Does the revolutionary movement also have its own policies and programs for looking after the welfare of children?*

Answer: It is the policy of the revolutionary movement and its various organs to look after the welfare of children.

The committees on education, teachers and mass organizations (especially those of the teachers, women, cultural activists, youth, and children) in areas under the people's revolutionary self-government are required to implement educational programs for children. Teachers are encouraged to perform their teaching functions conscientiously and promote patriotic and democratic values, ideas and practices among the children.

The local organs of political power and the mass organizations look after the health of mothers and children, promote health education, nutrition and sanitation, and direct the building of a system of disease prevention and health care delivery. The health system in-

cludes professional health workers and trained local paramedic volunteers. Day care centers or systems of collective or shared child care are established wherever possible. The committees on health and the mass organizations of health workers cooperate with the other mass organizations and the medical officers of the NPA.

Parents are advised to keep their children in school especially those who are 15 years or younger and to let them perform tasks commensurate to their age and that do not prevent study time at home. The organs of political power and the mass organizations try to prevent exploitative practices in farms, plantations and factories, especially against children.

The organs of political power and the mass organizations of youth, women, teachers and cultural activists promote the setting up of children's organizations in recognition of the right of children to uphold and advance their own rights and participate in social transformation on the basis of their capacities and capabilities. Children are encouraged to participate and help as peer instructors in educational activities and cultural work, engage in production, do organizing work among the youth, join in various mass movements and other wholesome endeavors for their own intellectual, cultural, political and social development as well as for the benefit of their families, their communities and the revolutionary movement. They are also encouraged to actively support the programs of the revolutionary organs of people's political power, the peasant, women and other sectoral mass organizations, and the various functional committees.

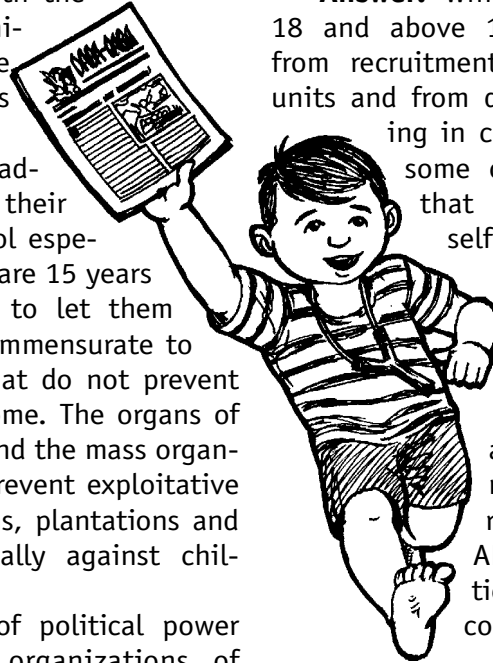
Question: *Are there forms of involvement in the armed revolution or in the activities of the NPA that may be misconstrued as participation in armed combat?*

Answer: While children below 18 and above 15 are prohibited from recruitment in NPA combat units and from directly participating in combat operations, some of their activities that prepare them for self-defense, for defending their respective communities and contributing to the overall revolutionary effort are often maliciously misrepresented by the AFP as actual participation in armed combat.

These include undergoing basic instruction and training, with their parents and community's guidance, on how to defend their own homes and communities from assaulting government military, police and paramilitary forces. They provide invaluable assistance in passing information about the presence, arrival or movement of government troops. They assist as well in passing food and other non-military supplies and in undertaking other indirect and non-hazardous support functions for NPA units that happen to be in their communities.

Even as they undertake such tasks, they remain civilians and do not carry firearms. Their status is not much different from that of high school and college students undergoing state-mandated preparatory or basic military training.

The Armed Forces of the Philippines maliciously misrepresents and viciously treats such youth as



"child soldiers" whenever they assist in the collective self-defense efforts of their communities.

Question: *How was the process of unification with regard to the policy carried out among the Party organs and NPA commands? How is it disseminated and what are the steps taken to ensure that it is understood, adopted and implemented?*

Answer: The primary means of unification was through the dissemination via a memo informing the various Party organs and NPA commands down to the basic units about the CPP Political Bureau's 1988 decision to set a minimum age requirement for recruitment into the NPA. In 1999, another memorandum of the CPP-EC reiterating the 1988 decision and reformulating the NPA's basic rule was issued and published in *Ang Bayan*, the CPP news organ. All NPA units were informed of the decision and required to discuss the revised rules and the explanations in the memos. Discussions on the policy amendment were held during meetings of the various Party organs and NPA units, and during educational campaigns. The Task Force Geneva's direct investigations in various regions and local units of the Party and the NPA also helped a lot.

In late 2002, the 11th Plenum of the CPP Central Committee reiterated the same decision and again sent out instructions to all Party and NPA units emphasizing the need for strict compliance with the minimum age requirement.

Furthermore, the Protocol II document has become part of the training course for NPA officers. It has been translated into Pilipino

and other local languages and disseminated among Party units and NPA commands.

Also, the Breukelen Joint Declaration and the CARHRIHL documents, both of which emphasize the importance of international standards and international humanitarian law, have been translated into the major languages and are widely disseminated and studied within the Party, NPA and revolutionary mass organizations.

Question: *How has implementation been monitored? What is the level of compliance with the policy?*

Answer: Regional Party Committees and NPA Regional Operational Commands have been tasked by the CPP-CC to oversee and ensure compliance with the minimum age requirement. The various Party committees and NPA commands at various levels down the line are responsible for ensuring strict compliance.

Recruitment to NPA units are undertaken and decided upon in a decentralized manner. Lower units of the NPA act according to standing policies and guidelines for recruitment. They periodically submit to higher commands and to the Party leadership general summary reports regarding the status and problems of forces and recruits, among other matters.

The reporting system can be improved to integrate more definitively checkups on compliance with

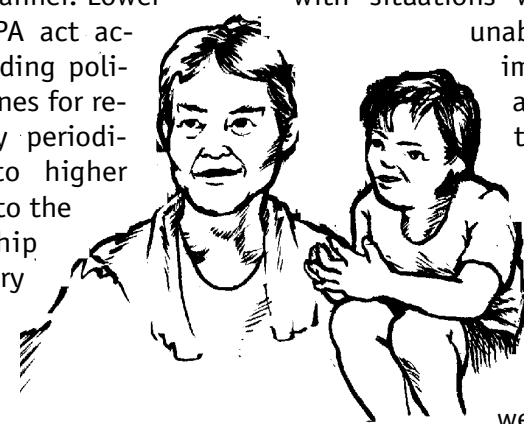
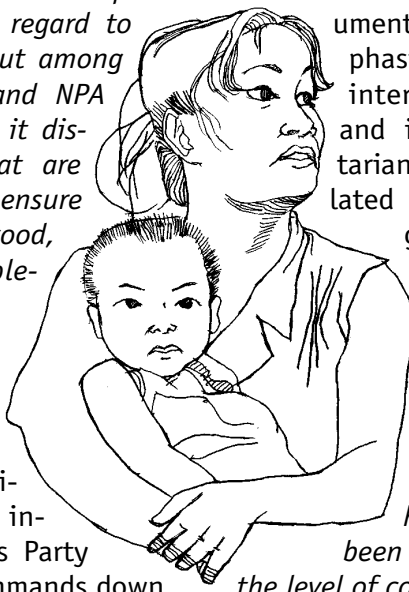
the minimum age requirement as well as other NPA policies and rules. Higher Party organs and NPA commands can also specifically require submission of special reports on violations of such policy.

As a whole, CPP cadres and NPA commands and units have a firm grasp of the minimum age policy and have generally and seriously complied with it. Over the years, the commitment to uphold this policy has been strengthened as Party and NPA units deepen their understanding and work towards the elimination of whatever few cases remain that are contrary to such policy.

Question: *What are the sanctions for non-compliance?*

Answer: In cases of violations of policy, concerned units are required to immediately address the situation and undertake corrective measures and possible disciplinary actions. So far, even among the isolated cases of non-compliance which have taken place in the past, that is before the CPP and NPA leadership pushed for universal compliance, there have been no unmitigated disregard for the minimum age policy. In most of these cases, NPA units were confronted with situations where they were

unable to work out immediately viable alternative options for elements below 18 years of age, including those whose parents are full-time Red fighters, whose families were blacklisted by the military or who were themselves being hunted down by the enemy armed forces and cannot be immediately



relocated.

Due to the understandable extenuating circumstances surrounding these isolated cases of non-compliance, the CPP and NPA have relied more on education and criticism, as well as issuing political guidance and extending organizational assistance to NPA units to help them implement the minimum-age policy and rectify previous violations to the policy.

Question: *What is your reaction to the findings of the UNICEF research team?*

Answer: The CPP welcomes the findings of your research which we find to be quite fair and objective. The information you have gathered from various NPA units confirms the seriousness and determination of the NPA generally to carry out its policy requiring a minimum age of 18 years for recruitment into its combat units. We must underscore the fact that in the course of your research, even if there have been cases of understandable non-compliance in the past, these have been corrected and at present, no actual active child combatant has been recorded among the NPA units you have come across with.

This is not to say that there have been completely no lapses especially in the early years of implementation of the minimum age requirement policy since 1999. However, such cases have become fewer and fewer since 2002, as can be partially gleaned from the results of your research. Furthermore, we must also point out that while these constitute "lapses" in the implementation of the more stringent internal rules of the NPA, these do not necessarily constitute violations of international rules, as stated in the reply above to question #4. AB

The NDFP's stand on children's rights*

What most Filipino children suffer

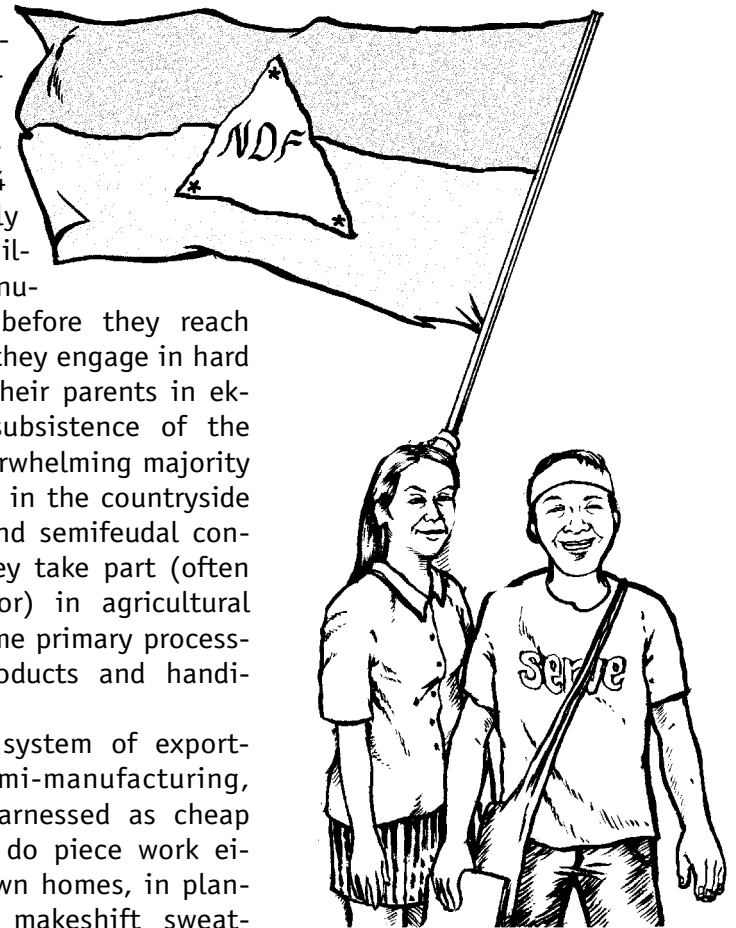
At least 90% of Filipino children suffer gross human rights violations under the semicolonial and semifeudal ruling system of the comprador big bourgeoisie and landlord class. They are victimized by the same foreign and feudal oppression and exploitation that torment their worker and peasant parents.

They live in appalling conditions of poverty and gross deprivation. They are malnourished and are prone to illness. They have extremely limited or no access to education, health care, medicine and proper housing. The overwhelming majority of them do not go beyond grade 4 and generally regress into illiteracy and innu-meracy. Long before they reach the age of 15, they engage in hard labor to help their parents in eking out the subsistence of the family. The overwhelming majority of children live in the countryside under feudal and semifeudal conditions and they take part (often as unpaid labor) in agricultural production, some primary processing of the products and handicrafts.

Under the system of export-oriented semi-manufacturing, children are harnessed as cheap wage labor to do piece work either in their own homes, in plantations or in makeshift sweat-

shops in urban slums and village communities. They are made to work for long hours, at times extending beyond 12 hours, at sub-human wages. A considerable number of children take to the streets to engage in petty peddling and other odd jobs in order to augment the inadequate incomes of their parents or make up for their parents' lack of employment.

Street children are exposed to extremely degrading conditions. Some of them are drawn to petty crimes, prohibited drug use and prostitution. They experience daily extortion and bullying from the



* Excerpts from "NDFP's Defense of the Rights of the Filipino Child," by Prof. Jose Maria Sison, NDFP Chief Political Consultant

police and are vulnerable to sexual molestation. They are often rounded up and dumped into crowded jails where they are mixed with hardened criminals.

The worst cases involve the murder and trafficking of children.

...

There is also the trafficking of children for illegal adoption, for making them sex slaves or sometimes for the sale of their internal organs abroad.

...

Children of lower middle class parents who go abroad in large numbers and take up menial jobs are left behind and also become susceptible to the risks of being without direct parental attention and motherly care. In these cases, the violations of the rights of the child are often veiled by the illusion that the remittances of their parents take care of everything.

The children of the Bangsa Moro and other national minorities suffer not only the class exploitation and oppression of the workers and peasants. They also suffer national discrimination in general and specific terms.

Comprehensive NDFP position on child rights

The National Democratic Front of the Philippines (NDFP) concerns itself with the rights and welfare of the millions of children below 18 years of age by addressing the root causes of the violations of the rights of the child. These root causes are in the rotten ruling system of oppression and exploitation, of extreme wealth for a few and extreme poverty for so many. In the concrete, the NDFP defends the children from the assaults on their rights by the three evils in semicolonial and semifeudal Philippine society: foreign monopoly capitalism, feudalism and bu-

From the viewpoint of the armed revolutionaries, the oppressed and exploited people have no choice but to wage a just war of national liberation, strive for victories and thus have hope of fundamental change for the better.

reaucrat capitalism.

The NDFP upholds, defends and promotes the rights of the child in accordance with its own principles, policies and regulations as well as with the international norms and standards set forth directly and indirectly in conventions and treaties. It has a program for the Filipino people to work and fight for national liberation and democracy against the foreign and local oppressors and exploiters. It aims to uphold national sovereignty and empower the working people, to carry out land reform and national industrialization, to foster a patriotic, scientific and democratic culture and to pursue an independent foreign policy for world peace and development.

.....

The NDFP takes pains to stress to all entities honestly concerned with human rights in general and the rights of the child in particular to take a comprehensive and profound view of the fact that human rights violations against the toiling masses of workers and peasants, women and children are rampant in the Philippines, whether the people wage armed resistance or not. And when armed conflict occurs, it is the military, police and irregular forces of the GRP that wantonly unleash unjust violence to preserve the unjust ruling system.

....

From the viewpoint of the armed revolutionaries, the oppressed and exploited people have no choice but to wage a just war of

national liberation, strive for victories and thus have hope of fundamental change for the better.

....

Child rights as issue in the civil war

....

Since 1988, ahead of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army have categorically adopted the policy of prohibiting the recruitment of children below 18 to serve as combatants. And time and again, the NDFP has declared that both its policy and the law of the people's democratic government prohibit the NPA from recruiting children below the age of 18 to serve as combatants that can be deployed for military offensive campaigns and operations.

Those between the age of 15 and 18 may be trained and directed by the mass organizations not for the purpose of participation in combat or hostilities but for the purpose of safety and self-defense in their own homes and communities.

....

However, certain malicious detractors of the NDFP and the people's democratic government, in UN and US official agencies and imperialist-funded nongovernmental organizations define a so-called child soldier as anyone below 18 years of age, who may simply be in a community under attack by the armed forces of the reactionary state and who even if without arms may be

misrepresented as combatants for being presumably lookouts, spies, porters, messengers, cooks and what else of the NPA.

....

There are those who have capitalized on a handful of false cases of "child soldier" fabricated by the GRP military psywar experts and have extrapolated these into a far bigger number of "child soldiers" supposedly arrested by the GRP military and police. These are belied by the records of the Joint Monitoring Committee (created by CARHRIHL) and by earlier reliable records.

....

All entities spewing out the propaganda that the NPA recruits "child soldiers" below 18 years and that there is a high proportion of NPA "child soldiers" among the children below 18 years in NPA areas are themselves violators of the rights of the child. They play loose with the definition of the so-called child soldier. Anyone below 18 who is alleged to have any role in the NPA, even if a noncombatant, is a child soldier. In a perversion of justice and due process, they put on the NPA the burden of proving that it has no "child soldiers" and they do not bother to bring their accusations and evidence to the GRP-NDFP peace negotiations or the Joint Monitoring Committee under CARHRIHL.

After four years of existence, the Unicef-funded Philippine Coalition to Stop the Use of Child Soldiers has not attempted to establish direct communication with the

NDFP. Even the Unicef has neither presented positive proof nor asked the NDFP to comment on the researches (which is normal academic practice) that it has used to conclude that there are child soldiers in the NPA.

....

Contrary to their claims that they defend the rights of the child, the detractors of the NPA actually pave the way for the GRP military, police and irregular forces to arrest, detain, torture and murder children in their own homes and communities. In their attempt to demonize the NPA, they spread the propaganda that children in communities suspected of being pro-NPA are fair game for military attack. They also conceal the crimes of the armed minions of the GRP and make the large-scale real violators of the rights of the child appear innocent of their crimes.

Gross violations of child rights in GRP military campaigns



revolutionary movement. The aggressors justify their brutal attacks on the children because supposedly these are active members or reserves of the NPA. They direct lethal fire at children whom they

subsequently misrepresent as NPA fighters.

GRP military campaigns of suppression often involve the wanton killing of adults and children through bombings, artillery fire, strafing from airplanes and by infantry, looting and burning. After the GRP troops secure control of a village, children who are estimated to be at least 10 years old are at risk of being falsely accused as NPA combatants and being arbitrarily arrested, beaten up, tortured or murdered. In fact, it is an old continuing practice of GRP troops to feel out the shoulders of such children supposedly to find out whether the shoulders are hard enough to indicate frequent carrying of rifles.

....

Increasingly, the military and police of the GRP abduct children from suspected NPA-supporting communities and misrepresent them to the mass media as so-called child soldiers of the people's army.

....

Whenever they target an area for military suppression, the GRP military, police and irregular forces engage in food blockades, force the people to evacuate or let them stay in their community under the terms of the concentration camp or "strategic hamlet." Under conditions of food blockade or forced mass evacuation, the worst harm is inflicted on so many children. They go hungry, become sick without health care and have no chance to go to school for a long time. When the people are made to stay in their village, the troops occupy the school house as barracks and deprive the children of schooling.

In evacuation centers, the children are mainly the casualties. They are hit the hardest by outbreaks of diseases, like diarrhea,

respiratory illness, measles and the like. They are also vulnerable to sexual abuse due to the flimsy accommodations, if any.

...

Harsh world for the children and the people's resistance

The children of today live in an unprecedentedly harsh world, in which US imperialists and their followers can violate human rights with impunity and stigmatize the victims as the culprits. Under the auspices of the United Nations, the IMF, World Bank and the WTO, they coordinate the exploitation of the people of the world under the inhuman neoliberal economic policy. The US and other imperialist powers have used the UN repeatedly to justify, facilitate, carry out, prolong or prettify aggression and repression.

....

The US and its bilateral and multilateral instruments (including the UN) cannot claim moral authority whatsoever to sit in judgment of and discredit genuine national liberation movements. It is clear that the US and its imperialist and puppet allies exploit the issue of human rights and humanitarianism as the pretext for military intervention and aggression.

...

But the people of the world know better than to let the US and its accomplices go on violating the national and democratic rights and the entirety of human rights, including those of women and children. They are rising up to resist imperialist war and plunder. They want to build a new and better world in which they can enjoy the blessings of national independence, democracy, social justice, development and world peace. AB

Numerous distortions in the book, *Deadly Playgrounds*

The revolutionary forces categorically reject the book, *Deadly Playgrounds: The Phenomenon of Child Soldiers in the Philippines*, which was published in August 2005 by the Philippine Human Rights Center (PhilRights), an institution known for its stable of political allies made up of personalities and organizations who are anti-CPP and anti-NPA and who are against the armed struggle. Behind its pretense of being a serious and in-depth study on the issue of child soldiers, this book contains many slanderous distortions against the Communist Party of the Philippines and the New People's Army.

The book starts with an overextended and misleading definition of "child soldiers". In its introduction, it mentions that "child soldiers are those below 18 who participate in any kind of regular or nonregular armed force or group, whatever their roles or tasks may be in these organizations." This hugely distorts the UN definition in the Convention of the Child (UNCRC), which states that those who ratified the said convention are encouraged not to recruit "children under 15 years old into their armed forces and should refrain from involving them in hostilities."

PhilRights maliciously distorts the UNCRC definition to misrepresent its own as the international standard. Like the AFP, it does not differentiate between combatants and non-combatants. It not only misrepresents as "child soldiers" as

those who participate in the revolutionary process according to their capabilities as activists or participants in the social programs of the revolutionary movement. It exposes these children to fascist military attacks by portraying them as combatants even though they do not take part in armed hostilities.

Based solely on questionable data, the book asserts the AFP's claim that the NPA's recruitment of children is an extensive policy. The book blindly accepts accounts from newspapers regarding the capture of 172 children who allegedly served in the NPA from 1997-2003. These cases are all lifted from the AFP's record of lies. It mindlessly swallowed hook, line and sinker the AFP's claim that 3% of NPA fighters are children.

The book was written to benefit the AFP and go against the CPP and NPA. It did not skimp on space in publishing the lies of the AFP and the bandit paramilitary group RPA-ABB. On the other hand, there is no reference anywhere in the book to any official or public statement or document from the CPP and NPA.

Through this book, PhilRights sings in chorus with the AFP's propaganda against the NPA. It irresponsibly and maliciously lays down the basis for the AFP's psywar on the NPA's so-called widespread recruitment of child soldiers. This book should rightfully be rejected as part of counterrevolutionary, anti-Party, anti-NPA and pro-AFP propaganda. AB